

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1

NEW LONDON DAY (CONN.)
5 JANUARY 1980

Hilsman criticizes U.S. stance toward Iran, Soviet Union

By Lee Howard
Day Staff Writer

LYME — Saying it's time that foreign policy experts speak out, a former assistant secretary of state has criticized the Carter administration's get-tough stance toward the Soviet Union and Iran.

Roger Hilsman of Lyme, assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, said the administration's handling of the Iranian situation has been inept. He also said measures aimed at the Soviet Union following its invasion of Afghanistan threaten to ruin detente and thrust the world into another Cold War.

A long-time supporter of the Kennedys, Hilsman said he decided to speak out on White House foreign policy without consulting Democratic presidential candidate Edward M. Kennedy. He said he has offered to make campaign speeches for the Massachusetts senator but at this time has no role in Kennedy's campaign.

"Everyone has been leaning over backwards not to criticize the administration over the Iranian crisis. I believe now is the time to speak out a little bit," Hilsman said Friday in an interview at his home on Route 156.

"The administration has a record of not paying attention to foreign policy experts in the State Department and the CIA," he said. "The crisis was created by the White House going against the advice of experts — against their unanimous advice."

"We've all been keeping quiet because we thought the White House would luck out. Unfortunately, it appears our foreign policy posture has deteriorated around the globe."

Hilsman, 60, said the administra-

tion's initial policy of "non-provocative pressure" was a good one in that it was not likely to trigger retaliatory action. Shiite Moslems, he explained, consider it a religious honor to be martyrs, and provocative actions would only satisfy their desire.

Unfortunately, Hilsman said, the administration over the past few weeks has talked more frequently of provocative actions. White House officials have talked about moving more military forces into the area, have suggested to American allies that they engage in an economic boycott of Iran, have discussed possible military intervention and have expressed an interest in finding a military base in the area.

None of these moves would be effective, he said.

Hilsman said there are only two ways to get out of the Iranian crisis: Quietly put pressure on other Islam nations to try to convince Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini that the holding of hostages is hurting Islam or hope that friendly military leaders will overthrow the government.

Hilsman is convinced that the longer the United States keeps up its threatening posture, the longer it will take for Iranian military men to launch a successful coup. And the longer it takes to launch a coup, the greater the chance that a takeover will be initiated by Iranian communists, he said.

Hilsman said the military is sympathetic and friendly toward Americans, but virtually all the top military leaders have been killed by supporters of the former shah and the ayatollah. He said the military command is composed almost entirely of colonels, and they must secure new chains of command before

CONTINUED

they are organized enough to overthrow the ayatollah.

Hilsman is afraid the United States is playing into the hands of communists by focusing the Iranian military's attention on Iran's security rather than on establishing a new chain of command. The communists, a small group but better organized than other segments of Iranian society, may have time to locate sympathizers and arm them for a coup, he said.

Hilsman believes the most likely outcome of the present American posture is a drawn-out trial for the American hostages and a communist takeover in Iran. Hilsman indicated he believes some sort of coup is only months away.

Hilsman said the present United States position also makes it difficult for other Moslem nations to put pressure on Iran. He urged President Carter to ease United States pressure on Iran to create a climate in which Moslem nations can approach Khomeini to ask for the release of hostages.

The situation in Afghanistan is distinct and separate from the problems in Iran, Hilsman said, adding he does not believe the Soviets have any intentions beyond Afghanistan.

Hilsman said the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviets is a direct result of weak foreign policy leadership and the decline of the American economy.

Hilsman said the White House mismanaged Congress on the SALT II treaty, leading the Soviets to believe it would never receive Senate approval. The administration also irked the Soviets by refusing to discuss nuclear weapon build-ups in NATO's Western Europe forces.

The Soviets, convinced detente was dead and the American economy was dying, had no reason to restrain themselves from invading Afghanistan, Hilsman said. He criticized Carter's proposed sanctions against the Soviets as being ineffectual and indicating a return of the Cold War.

"It has taken us 20 years to build up a decent detente, and the government is throwing it away in a matter of a few months," he said. "Detente is being flushed down the drain, not by malice, but by ineptness."

An unsuccessful Democratic candidate in the second congressional district in 1972, Hilsman is now a professor of government at Columbia University. He has authored or co-authored 11 books on foreign policy and politics.